



Golden Gate HOG

Chapter

#4753



Group Rider's Handbook



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Preface

The purpose of this handbook is to notify and instill the importance of group riding safety within each Golden Gate HOG Chapter member and associate, and is intended to document some obvious, and not so obvious, elements of group motorcycle riding. **The Golden Gate HOG Chapter is not responsible for providing instruction for individual riding skills** and all members are presumed to have obtained, prior to participating in group riding activities with Golden Gate HOG Chapter the skills and experience necessary to safely operate their motorcycle on all road types, road surfaces and in all traffic conditions, the group might encounter. The information presented within this handbook includes a collective knowledge of our most experienced riders, information from the DMV Motorcycle Manual, other professional motorcycle riding resources, and San Francisco Bay Area HOG Chapters. It is important for each Golden Gate HOG Chapter member to familiarize themselves with the topics addressed here so that they will understand the responsibility of all riders, and the roles of Road Captains and the structure of a group ride.

Although the leadership of the Golden Gate HOG Chapter, its Road Captains and Safety Officers are committed and dedicated to fostering a safe and enjoyable group riding experience to its members, **all members and associates are responsible for their own safety at all times** and Golden Gate HOG Chapter Road Captains and Safety Officers are provided solely as guides for group riding activities and are not individually or collectively responsible for ensuring the safety of individual riders or passengers.

We cannot stress enough the importance of all these topics and the critical impact they have on promoting a safe and enjoyable Chapter Event. If you should have questions regarding any of the items discussed in this handbook, please see any Road Captain or Chapter Officer for clarification. Thank you in advance for your positive participation in supporting these guidelines.

Road Captain Leadership Team

Golden Gate Harley Owners Group



Riding In a Group

The following guidelines were developed by the Golden Gate HOG Chapter to prepare members and their guests for group riding in Chapter sponsored events. "Group riding" is not the same as riding with a group of friends and requires knowledge of group formations, hand signals and other group riding practices. In addition to this handbook, all riders should familiarize themselves with the California Motorcycle Handbook available from the California DMV. All chapter members are encouraged to regularly participate in motorcycle riding enhancement classes.

All Group Rider Responsibilities

Chapter members and associates shall follow all instructions of the Road Captains in any situations, unless those instructions place the rider or any other individual in an unsafe situation.

Members and associates shall observe the objectives and guidelines of this handbook in order to enhance the potential safety and the welfare of every individual within the group, and any surrounding motorists or pedestrians.

Members and associates shall properly maintain their motorcycle and other equipment in a safe riding condition, wear and have available the appropriate riding apparel, and, if riding at night, will have a pair of clear or yellow glasses available.

Members and associates shall always ride with headlights on.

Members and associates shall ride with a "**safety comes first**" attitude. The safety of all individuals, whether or not they are part of the group, is of paramount importance.

Members and associates, including their guests who may be non-members are always responsible for their own safety and should not ride with the group unless they have the skills and experience necessary to safely operate their motorcycle in or around groups including all road types, road surfaces, traffic and weather conditions the group might encounter.

Meeting Place and Departure

Please arrive at the designated meeting place before the scheduled leave time. The Lead Road Captain will give a general briefing prior to departure. You will be introduced to the Road Captains for the day's ride. The Lead Road Captain will explain the route and any potential hazards on the route. Frequently, at the conclusion of the briefing it is customary to take a group photo. After the photo please stage your motorcycle following the instructions of the Road Captains.

Signed waivers are required for all minors including all minors who are associate members of Golden Gate HOG Chapter. Signed waivers are required for all riders and passengers that are not HOG members. There are three different waivers, one for adults, one for minors, and an additional one for minors who are between the ages of twelve (12) and eighteen (18). The Road Captains have copies of these waivers,



and will ask to have the appropriate forms signed during the pre-ride period. Prior to the date of the run it is wise to check the Chapter website (goldengatehog.net) to ensure that the date/time, and destination of the run haven't been changed. If the run looks like a rain-out, or any other reason impacting safety (i.e... Wildfire) the Senior Road Captain and/or Director may cancel it.

Riding Formation

Once the Ride Leader has delivered the riders briefing, the positioning of riders will take place on the road. If the number of riders is fairly large or the route is difficult to follow, the Lead Road Captain may split the riders into two or more groups. It is suggested New Chapter members, inexperienced group riders and guests consider riding to the rear of the pack in the beginning to become accustomed to riding with a group.

Open Highway

When traveling on the open highway we will use the **staggered riding formation**. The first motorcycle in this formation occupies the left 1/3 of the lane and is held by the leading Road Captain. The second motorcycle will be in the right 1/3 of the lane, one second behind the first rider, and so on down the line. This allows you two seconds between the rider directly in front and behind you and one second between you and the riders in opposite sides of the lane. This safety zone between each motorcycle allows any rider to maneuver to the right or left without hitting anyone else. Always stay in line with the bike in front of you. Do NOT switch between left and right sides of the lane. (This applies only in the State of California. For any rides that maybe outside of the State, consult with the Lead Road Captain for the proper method for filling gaps in the formation) If a rider moves out of formation, the next rider on the same side of the lane where the vacancy exists should move up to fill that spot and so on down the line. Always maintain your safety zone. However, too much following distance can be as bad as too little. If the formation lacks uniformity then we don't look like we are together as a group, and we become regarded as random individual vehicles in the traffic pattern. Too much following distance invites cars into the formation, splitting it up in traffic.

Do not become fixated on the rider ahead of you; be alert and pay attention to the road. When moving up to a vacancy, be sure there are no road hazards approaching. If you want to ride with someone it is best to stay in the same lane together, one behind the other. That way if the pack re-adjusts during the ride to fill open gaps you will still be with your riding buddy.

Lane changes during group riding require a special concern. A lane change is signaled by the lead rider and passed down the line by the following riders.

When the Sweep position has received the lane change signal, the Sweep(s) will move into the new lane when it is safe to do so and protect the lane. The leading Road Captain will initiate the group lane change, and each following rider in line makes the lane change. Even though the lane is guarded it is important for each rider to ensure it is safe to make the lane change. Do not rely on your mirror. Be sure to look back in the lane to check for any vehicles that are moving into the lane. Do not change lanes as soon as a



lane change is signaled. Instead wait until the lane is protected and the leading Road Captain has initiated the lane change.

Entry onto, and exit from, freeways require much vigilance, and all riders must be highly aware of the surrounding environment within and outside the group. It is fairly common to encounter cars that are also merging into the same entries or exits, so particular attention must be paid to these drivers, as they may not be watching for motorcycles. A safe practice is to give way to the vehicles to allow them to merge through the group of riders, then reform the group once safely past the exit.

Group separation

Often when riding as a group in congested traffic the pack will become separated. If this occurs do not be over anxious to catch up with the group. Many times, the group may be separated by a vehicle, which is changing lanes as it moving towards an exit, in which case it will soon leave the highway and the group will no longer be separated. In other cases, it may be necessary to change lanes to regroup with the pack. These lane changes should proceed as previously described with the leading Road Captain signaling the lane change, the Sweep(s) protecting the lane and the separated riders safely changing lanes. Again, do not be overly anxious to catch up with the pack. In large groups there will often be a Middle Road Captain who will assume the leading position if the group is irreconcilably separated. If the Middle Road Captain is not in the separated group, a sweep may move up to assume the leading position. The leading Road Captain and Advance Road Captain will be aware of the group separation and will act accordingly, often waiting at a predetermined stop.

When traffic lights, vehicles, etc., separate the pack, the last bike in the main pack will wait at each corner where a turn is made. The waiting rider is sometimes referred to as a breadcrumb. This practice will continue at each subsequent turn until the pack is reformed. This procedure, following breadcrumbs, will make it unnecessary for any rider to speed-up to try and catch up with the main group.

City Streets

Navigating a pack of riders through numerous traffic intersections presents its own complications. Due to the decreased speed it is often safe to travel in a tighter pack. A tight pack discourages other vehicles from shooting between riders. When coming to a stop at a controlled intersection, a rider should stop alongside the rider in front of him. When moving out from a stop the rider on the left takes off first, followed by the rider on the right, the rider on the left, and so on down the line.



Single File Formation

While the staggered formation is a safe practice on the open highway it is not safe where there is limited road surface such as country roads with narrow lanes, roads with no shoulders, or on a tight winding road. In situations such as these it is necessary for a rider to be able to use the whole lane to maneuver the motorcycle. In such cases the leading Road Captain will signal single file formation. (See Appendix A for hand signals.) In single file formation the safety zone between you and the rider who was in the opposite side of the lane will increase from one second to two seconds as that rider may now cross freely from one side of the lane to the opposite side of the lane. The pack will stay in single file formation until the leading Road Captain signals a return to staggered formation.

Accident management

If the pack happens upon an accident do not leave the pack. Follow the direction of the Ride Leader. Only the Sweep(s) position and /or Safety Officer should leave the group under these circumstances. If the Lead decides that assistance should be given, he/she will lead the pack in a safe and orderly stop.

If an accident occurs within the pack follow the directions of the Road Captains. Managing an accident scene requires an organized effort. Be sure to provide for your own safety and park in a safe area. Do as you are instructed. If you are trained in first aid or you have other skills, which would help at the accident scene, let the Road Captain and/or Safety Officer in charge know this. Once the scene is managed and it is safe to do so, assist when necessary the Road Captains and/or Safety Officer(s) with documenting what occurred at the scene. You can do this by interviewing witnesses, taking pictures, etc. Always respect the privacy of victims and/or emergency personnel when taking photos of the accident scene. Do not interfere with police activity or fire and emergency personnel. Since we often ride together it is possible that someone you know personally may have been involved in the accident. Before leaving the scene of an accident ensure you are feeling well enough and are in a safe frame of mind to safely operate your motorcycle. Check to make sure other riders in the group are up to riding on.



Riding Guidelines

Group Size

If the group of riders is larger than the recommended size for a safe ride, the group may be split into manageable numbers of 15 – 25 bikes. This is necessary to ensure the safety of the group, and to allow the group to stay together as we progress to the destination. Whenever there are riders present preferring to ride in the “Cruiser” style, a group will be assigned for this purpose. The Lead Road Captain will reassign another Road Captain to lead the second group, as well as assign Middle and Sweep(s) positions.

Route and Destination

Most runs have a destination other than the point of origin. Some riders, including the Road Captain, may ride to the destination and then ride somewhere else or return home. If any riders are unfamiliar with the way home, determine if you can follow someone else back. Our runs do not require that everyone stay together on the return, but we don't want to leave someone stranded either. We suggest that all riders carry maps of the areas where they will be riding so they will not get lost.

Hand signals

Hand signals will be used during group riding, and will be passed back by all riders through the pack. At all times, standard hand signals will be used for:

1. Changing the formation to a single file and back to stagger.
2. All turns, lane changes, slowing, and stopping.
3. Other signals may be developed and added as required.

NOTE: Turn signal lights will also be used at all times.

For further information, see Appendix A.



Breakdown procedures

In the event a rider runs out of gas, breaks down, or otherwise must make an unscheduled stop alongside the road the entire pack will not attempt to pull over with the rider. This responsibility falls with the Sweep(s) Road Captain, and another Road Captain, if necessary. Once the reason for the stop has been determined, the Sweep will communicate via radio or cell phone to the Lead to explain what has happened. In all cases the leading Road Captain will attempt to make cell phone contact with the Sweep Road Captain(s) once the group stops for gas, rest, or at the destination point. The Sweep Road Captain(s) that stopped with the rider will remain with him/her until there has been a safe resolution of the issue.

Gas, Food, Rest Stops and Tolls

If necessary, due to the length of the trip, gas, food, rest stops, and tolls, will be discussed and scheduled prior to departure. These scheduled stops will be adhered to as much as possible, depending on varying condition as the trip progresses.

Deviation from the scheduled stops may be required due to varying weather, traffic, and bladder conditions (availability of gas, rider fatigue, and other unforeseen circumstances.)

Gas and rest stops is recommended be limited to no more than 10 to 20 minutes, depending on the size of the group.

Food stops will vary in length with the size of the group, but should be held to a reasonable minimum.

Unscheduled or Emergency Stops

Unscheduled stops for gas, rest room, or rider fatigue can lead to confusion in the group, and confusion can lead to accidents. The leading Road Captain should be informed that a stop is necessary in order to lead the group in an organized fashion to the next convenient and safe place to stop.

A rider with an equipment problem should inform one of the Road Captains as quickly, and as safely as possible. When the leading Road Captain is informed, he/she will stop the group at the earliest possible moment, when and where it is safe.

If the rider must pull over immediately, *only* the Sweep Road Captain(s) will accompany that rider to a stop. The leading Road Captain should be informed if he/she is not aware of this situation.

Any rider observing a problem with another rider's equipment should inform that rider as quickly and safely as possible. If it appears that a stop is necessary, the leading Road Captain should also be notified.

**Road Conditions**

As we are fortunate enough to live in an area where we can ride 365 days a year, there are basic things we have to keep in mind for safe riding:

Freeways

- 1 Stay left or right of lane center to avoid grease, oils, or coolant on road.
- 2 Stay on left of lane in diamond lanes to avoid sudden lane changes by other vehicles.
- 3 Avoid riding behind trucks or high-profile vehicles that obstruct vision.
- 4 Signal riders behind you of potential road hazards, i.e., dead animals, tire pieces, debris, etc.

Mountain Roads

- 1 Beware of temperature conditions. Infrequent as it might be, ice may form on bridges or sandy areas. In extremely hot conditions the road tar used to fill and repair cracks can become soft.
- 2 During rainy season be alert for snow, gravel, or mud from steep slide areas.
- 3 Higher elevation areas tend to drain water across the roadways. Watch for potential ice or slippery spots.
- 4 As mountain and secondary roads are often not maintained as well as highly traveled roads, be alert for potholes and soft shoulders.
- 5 Avoid riding near the shoulder of the road where curves are eminent.

Desert / Coast Highways

- 1 Cross wind is a major problem, so always ride staggered to give maximum maneuvering space between bikes.
- 2 Always watch for blowing sand and/or road debris as speed on these roads tend to be up and reaction time minimal.
- 3 Always be aware of temperature and wind effects on the body. Dehydration can occur resulting in heat stroke and blackouts. Always carry a bottle of water.
- 4 As much of the desert and coast highways are "open range," watch for animals, especially at dusk.



Bridges / Tunnels / Toll Booths

- 1 Some of our Bay Area bridges have metal grating as a primary roadbed, so be alert for wet or icy ones.
- 2 Some tunnels have low spots where water pools form, be alert when entering and exiting. Do not change lanes in tunnels.
- 3 If you elect to blast your pipes in tunnels, leave enough room in front for recovery.
- 4 Toll booth areas are notorious for having a layer of oil and grease. Start slowly out of the booth area to clear off any moisture from tires.

Safety Equipment

As mentioned previously, it is assumed that all riders will come to the ride with a well-maintained motorcycle (See your Owner's Manual.) and the appropriate riding apparel for the weather that maybe encountered.

All group riders are encouraged to bring a well-stocked Tool Kit to all Chapter rides.

All group riders are encouraged to bring a well-maintained First Aid Kit to all Chapter rides.

Having Fun and Riding Safely Are the Goals

All riders need to be comfortable with their riding environment. No one should feel pushed to exceed a speed they are comfortable with, nor tackle a road that they feel is beyond their skill level. Please talk with a Road Captain if you have concerns about the upcoming ride, and discuss alternatives. Bottom line – it does not matter how many Road Captains are present, nor how large or small the riding group is, you are responsible for your own safety.



Summary Riding Considerations

- Have a full tank of gas and an empty bladder before arriving at the departure point.
- Arrive on time, or a few minutes early.
- Have your bike in top running condition.
- Wear appropriate riding apparel.
- Follow all ride instructions.
- **Know, use, and pass all hand signals from the Lead**
- Point out road hazards for fellow riders.
- Never leave the group without notifying the group leader or other Road Captain.
- If you do not plan to stay with the group the entire ride let the Lead Road Captain know this prior to starting the run.
- Take care of personal needs immediately when group stops; be ready to go with everyone else.
- Ride in staggered formation unless indicated to ride in single file.



Golden Gate Harley Owners Group Road Captain Program

We encourage those chapter members that wish to take on a more responsible position in the Golden Gate HOG Chapter to consider becoming a candidate in the Road Captain Program. Below is a mission statement for the program and qualifications for this position.

Mission and Objectives

The mission of the Road Captain Program is to provide procedures and standards for recruiting, training and appointing members to the position of Road Captain in support of the overall goal of having rides and events which are fun, well organized and safe.

Road Captain Recommended Qualifications

Members may recommend to the Head Road Captain, a member in good standing in the Chapter to become a Road Captain candidate.

- Current and valid motorcycle insurance, with no less than the MINIMUM required by your state for street riding.
- Eighteen months (18) membership in the Golden Gate HOG chapter, with reasonable participation in runs throughout the previous (12) months.
- The Head Road Captain and Safety Officer may at their discretion shorten this period, if this is verifiable and is subject to the approval of the Road Captain Leadership Team. (This will always be considered on a case-by-case basis).
- Maintain a current First Aid/CPR Certification. (Desired).
- Successfully complete a CMSP of MSF, Experienced Riders Course. (Desired)
- Must successfully complete training sessions and evaluation ride(s).
- Before being accepted as a Road Captain, candidates will have Road Captain Leadership Team approval, with the Senior Road Captain having final approval. In case of any dispute final authority will always rest with the Board of Directors.



Hand Signals

In addition to ordinary turn signals, there are other signals used by riders.

Follow Me.

Arm extended straight up from shoulder with palm forward.

Ride Single File.

Ride in a single file. Used in the hills or other narrow lanes.

Left hand held straight up, index finger extended tells following riders to abandon riding in two files.



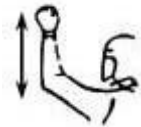
Ride in Two Files.

Left hand held straight up, index and middle fingers extended in a "V" shape or sign. Tells following riders to form a column of two files for normal riding.



Close Up the Gaps.

Left hand held out and up, fist closed, arm moving up and down. Tells riders to ride closer to the bike in front; column is too spread out. Needs to be relayed back, carefully.



Slow Down, Hazard Ahead.

Left hand reaching out and down with palm down, fingers extended, wrist back (up), arm moving as though bouncing a basketball. Tells following riders and/or oncoming traffic to proceed slowly, and with caution.



Law Enforcement Ahead.

Left hand patting top of helmet. Tells riders law enforcement has been seen in the area.



Gravel / Slippery Spot / Object on Road.

Hand with index finger extended pointing down at road where hazard appears. Tells following riders of traction or stability hazard.














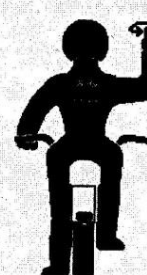
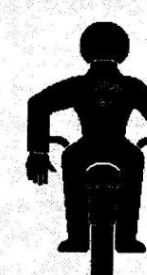







Don't Pass - Stay Behind.

Left hand out, fingers extended, palm rearward moving as though brushing something away.





				
Hazard on Left	Need Fuel	Single File	Pass/Move Beside	Problem
				
Pull Off/Regroup	Rest Stop	Hazard on Right	RR/Ground Hazard	Slow Down
				
Hazard on Right	Right Turn	Staggered	Start Up/Ready	Stop
				
Tighten Group	Turn Signal On	Side By Side	Speed Up	Police Ahead